

Good morning,

My name is Doug Lair. I live in Big Timber. My wife Mary and I have owned and operated a variety of businesses in Montana for nearly 30 years. ^{we} ~~we~~ currently operate a small sheep ^{perigated} hay ranch ^{west of BT.}

I'd ~~like~~ ^{WANT} to thank the 2011 legislative body for making the time in your busy schedule to address concerns about what really sustains the economy of this state. My intention is to talk with this committee about that which diminishes prosperity ^{in Montana}.

After meeting with many small business owners and representatives of large business enterprises, I wondered how I was going to organize and clearly represent the concerns expressed to me and how best to break them down by business sector. Then it occurred to me that there was a common theme from both small and large businesses. It is something you need to hear.

That theme is this: most private business owners and representatives do not wish to appear in person and identify themselves publicly because they are afraid of retribution from government regulatory agencies. These regulatory agencies, and TAXES, are the chief causes of a poor business climate. ^{that control their livelihoods} What a shame. Is it a coincidence that government is now the number one employer in Montana? If that doesn't point to an over-bearing government and over-regulation, I don't know what does. When did government stop being representative and start being proprietary? What area of business activity is not 'regulated' by one State bureaucracy or another? Many in this room distrust BIG business. Do you realize the over-reaching regulatory and compliance environment has only served to grow BIG business and Government at the expense of small business and the taxpayer.

Global

Ag, Mining,
Timber & Tourism

Healthy commerce creates money, not federal printing presses. Montana is addicted to federal funding. That funding has been almost entirely used to grow government services. It has been done at the expense of the private sector, which is the genuine and prudent source of wealth and prosperity. You may have heard earlier this week that 16% of our state is now on food stamps. We have become a state of predominantly government dependants, and that cannot possibly bode well for the economy and taxpayers of the state.

including many businesses

Perhaps you think I am speaking in broad generalities without any specifics that you act can on.

omit

I hope you understand that I am taking a significant personal and financial risk by sharing a personal experience. Regulatory agencies and government bureaucracies do not take criticism lightly or without responding. My partner and I own a 25 acre parcel of commercial ground in Big Timber. It spans from I-90 and old Highway 10. When we began development 5 years ago we went through a painstaking and expensive process involving at least 12 state and federal agencies working together to deny our private property rights. They attempted this by enforcing a complex network of layered regulations. Keep in mind Big Timber modeled its planning process after Livingston and Bozeman. Bozeman is an ICLEI city. What is ICLEI? The acronym stands for International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. Never heard of it you say, who are they? This is how they define themselves:

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"ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability is an association of over 1200 local government Members who are committed to sustainable development. Our Members come from 70 different countries and represent more than 569,885,000 people."

Omig

Some of those people reside in Bozeman, Missoula and Helena-yes Helena because Missoula and Helena are also ICLEI cities by contractual agreement. Does that give you some idea of the depth and nature of the problem?

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I hired a local consultant and legislator to help me navigate the complex myriad of regulations (you know who you are bless your heart). Key to our development was the addition of a new culvert under old Hwy 10 to relieve our property of peak flow storm water run-off that would pool up at the highway berm on the lower end of our property. We received permission from MDOT and the City and County to add the culvert and we designed accordingly and received our preliminary plat approval. During this two and a half years and a severe recession, we had a change of District Supervisors for the MDOT. Our new district supervisor unilaterally decided that we could NOT install our new culvert under Highway 10. We pointed out that such a decision would make our entire storm water runoff plan and lot design layout mostly useless. Their response; go back to the drawing board, re-run all of your water models, use different modeling methods, just make it work the way WE want it to work NOW or you get no approach approvals. Their position is firm. Now we must spend thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of dollars to re-design. (You know who you are, bless your heart.)

Re Start

Government has become unresponsive, and overbearing, period! It regulates or wants to regulate and restrict all aspects of education, business, fish and game, land use, water, transportation, agriculture, even our Constitutional freedoms. And the regulation is often arbitrary. This conclusion is evident and verified by my meetings with a significant cross section of Montana enterprises and it is also my personal experience as a

Montana businessman. It is time to roll back the bureaucracies and make government responsive and helpful or get out of the way of Montana business. Oh by the way, I don't have employees ~~any more~~. It's too much hassle.

~~and~~ Thank you for your time and I ^{by design} wish ^{am asking} you ^{to} success in defending ^{our} state rights and our freedom to prosper.

Thank you for your time and I ~~am~~ expect you to defend our state rights and freedom to prosper by getting ^{too much} government out of the way